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AUTHOR Van Allen, George H.
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ABSTRACT

Although the United States leads the world in spending for education, the quality of education is under attack from all quarters. On college campuses, the perceived necessity to maintain enrollment levels, and a post-60's reluctance to be selective in admissions contributed to waning academic standards. Economic interests have become the dominant force behind the mediocrity in higher education, with full-time equivalency (FTE) production becoming an end in itself. Grade inflation, prevalent in colleges and universities throughout the United States, helps to maintain retention and graduation rates, but leaves students without commensurate skills. The academic establishment must return to the tradition of using grades to measure academic achievement, rather than motivation, persistence, or participation. The community college system has sustained phenomenal growth and credentialling activity despite academically unprepared students. This productivity is attributed to inflated grades and a decline in standards. Studies have shown several community colleges to give disproportionately high numbers of A's and B's, despite the students' academic underpreparation on entering college. In addition, community colleges have traditionally embraced remedial programs, which analysis has shown to be ineffective in some cases. The intrusion of political forces into the educational arena are welcomed, but colleges need leaders of their own. Higher education needs leaders who will concentrate less on economic conditions and more on student achievement. Community colleges have traditionally looked to schools of education for decision makers, yet these schools routinely accept students with below average scores on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). In order to breed educational morality, graduate schools of education must become role models and distance themselves from mediocrity. (WJT)

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Educational Morality: A Task of Resisting the Economic Corruption of Academic Excellence.

by George H. Van Allen

January 1990

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Neosho County Community College
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EDUCATIONAL MORALITY: A TASK OF RESISTING
THE ECONOMIC CORRUPTION OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Overview: The Quantitative and Qualitative Output of Education

We have made a massive financial commitment to public education in the United States. Annual spending for the educational system exceeds the dollars expended for either national defense or health care. William Bennett, the former Secretary of Education and our current drug czar, has stated that America leads the world in spending for education. It is estimated that 328 billion dollars were required to sustain America's educational establishment for the 1988-89 academic year. The current Secretary of Education, Lauro Cavazos, projects a 6.8% increase in that spending which will bring the total financial commitment to 353 billion dollars. Translated into student costs, "taxpayers will spend $5,246...for each public school student...spending in higher education will be $14,923 per student," during the 1989-90 academic year (Ordovensky, 1989). There is no evidence predicting a decline in expenditures; instead, raising personnel costs, increased enrollments, and the incorporation of sophisticated teaching tools into the instructional process will continue the upward movement of educational outlays.

Matching the taxpayers sustained and generous support of public education is the quantitative output of the system. The system holds 58.7 million students, 400,000 more than in 1988-89. The less than one percent

increase in enrollment demanded the projected 6.8% increase in expenditures. Interestingly, there are more students attending colleges in 1989-90 than high schools (Ordovensky, 1989). These students will produce record levels of academic achievement in terms of persistence and resulting credentials. Three out of four attending high school will graduate, compared to a 51% graduation rate in 1967. The college class of 1990 will be awarded over a million undergraduate degrees and approximately 400,000 graduate degrees. Today, one person in five is a college graduate, doubling that of 1967 and far outdistancing the 4.61% of college graduates among the adult population of 1940 (Dunn, 1989). With over 15,000,000 college degrees awarded during the 1970's and 18,000,000 estimated for the 80's, there is no reason to expect the quantitative output of higher education to diminish, especially when enrollment and population trends are acknowledged (Stern, 1988).

America's academic institutions receive deserved acclaim for the numerical output described above. These organizations are also applauded for program diversity and a protracted effort to extend educational opportunity to all population segments. At the same time, the academic establishment is surviving under a wage of negative criticism. The criticism, and it is coming from all quarters, bemoans the unarrested decline in the quality of the output. There is an abundance of reports to warrant the charge that students are learning less, at all levels of the educational hierarchy, than their predecessors. Some reports reflect on isolated instances of the system's neglect for quality control. There are the much publicized cases of the former college athlete who can neither secure a professional contract nor function as a literate adult in spite of his college degree. In a less dramatic episode, a kindergarten teacher, who

had been given As and Bs at Portland State University, was found to be functionally illiterate (Foote, 1980). These illustrations, though discerning, are less troublesome when one recognizes the millions of college graduates who leave the hallowed halls.

The data, which are harmful and telling, address the performance of large groups and/or the relative achievement of classes over a period of time. This data bank seems to be the natural consequence of initial studies documenting the deteriorating scores of high school students sitting for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). In 1983, the results led Oldenquist, Professor of Philosophy at Ohio State, to write, "By these measures...for 18 years every...graduating class has been dumber than the preceding year's class." In 1988, USA Today's Ordovensky chronicled the lack of meaningful gains since 1983 and 1988's overall decline. Other comparative studies also reflect poorly on the qualitative output of high schools. One report drew the headline, "Test Reveals Students Economically Illiterate." Among other things, only one in three could define profit as revenue minus expenses. The article concluded: "Economics joins..writing, geography, foreign language, science and math where..U.S. students are achieving at dismal levels" (Associated Press (AP), 12-1989). Another survey found that only 22% of high school seniors knew the capital of the Philippines, despite all the news coverage the country has been receiving in recent years. Another comparative test ranked U.S. students fourteenth out of the fifteen nations in algebra (Perot, 1988). Citing similar outcomes in math and science exams administered to students from eleven industrial countries, George Bush called the apparent achievement level of America's youth unacceptable (Benedetto & Ordovensky, 1989).

Fortunately, nearly half of young adults move from high school to college to continue their academic pursuits, and millions have been granted undergraduate degrees. Unfortunately, there is evidence and much commentary that higher education, too, is producing mediocre results. One study discloses that half of those between 21 and 25, holding a bachelor's degree, "perform below the upper level of the literacy scales"(Stern, 1988). The findings also noted that the last two years of college did not contribute to an increase in the graduate's literacy skills. This means many of our most recent graduates can not, among other things, calculate a tip, using a given percentage, for a restaurant bill. It also means that too many college graduates lack effective communication skills, including the ability to express themselves in writing. This 1988 survey joins an "abundance of reports... that offer persuasive evidence that there is a profound crisis (in the condition of undergraduate education)" (Curtis, 1985). Prophetically, the same publication reads "such weaknesses would soon undermine public confidence in higher education..."

The qualitative output of the educational establishment has created an air of resentment and apprehension, not confidence, among the general public and various leaders. The statement, "Most American's agree that education is too important to be left to educators," gauges public sentiment accurately (Rothberg, 1989). Prominent leaders, representing the news media, and the political, educational and business arenas, are more direct in their statements. Wright (1988), former Speaker of the House of Representatives, addressing a large educational audience announced: "We have allowed ourself, unfortunately, to lag behind the greatest goal of all and that is quality education." George Bush is quoted, "The educational system, in spite of the money being spent, is not making the grade." "We've got to

see what it is we're doing wrong" (Benedetto & Ordovensky, 1989). Educators join Mr. Bush with statements like: "Evidence of decline and devaluation is everywhere" (Curtis, 1985). Chester Finn Jr., Director of the Educational Excellence Network, concludes the same: "The average student continues to emerge from the typical school in possession of mediocre skills and skimpy knowledge" (Benedetto & Ordovensky, 1989). And, some of our most read journalists, like Andy Rooney (1989) and Ann Landers (1989), have devoted columns to the erosion of quality being tolerated by the academic establishment. Even the cartoonist, Jim Strahle, has recognized the problem being fostered by the lack of quality control in a system engaged in mass production. Using the transfer of authority between Ronald Reagan and George Bush, his cartoon, "Strahle's Bailwick," was captioned: "Literacy in America takes a giant leap forward this week when 54%..will now be able to spell the president's name." Business leaders are less than humorous on the subject, complaining loudly about quality of the graduates entering the labor force and the costs of educating them. Lee Iacocca reported that Chrysler spent 11 million dollars teaching adults the "three R's they didn't learn...Hell, I'm in the business of building cars - not teaching remedial math" (Boyd, 1989). Perot (1988) after an exhaustive study of the educational system of Texas, commented, "we have diverted our schools from places of learning."

The 1980's arrived with similar data and commentary being aired. As a result, several national committees were organized to study the performance of the educational bureaucracy. Some centered on subject matter such as foreign language and mathematics. Others were more general in scope like those evaluating the health of the undergraduate degree, but only one captured the essence of the moment and the attention of the country. A

Nation at Risk concluded, among other things, that our commitment to quality education has been compromised. After the 1983 announcement that the U.S. was at risk due to shoddy education performance, billions of additional dollars were pumped into the system. "Computers were bought, teachers salaries were hiked...counseling increased...the results scant" (Benedetto and Ordovensky, 1989). The validity of the testimony was endorsed by the Center for Policy Research in Education. The Center evaluated the positive changes in education since the publication of A Nation at Risk. The Center's conclusion that the reform movement met with modest success, received the following headline: "80's education reform has only inched ahead" (Kelly, 10/1989). As failures mount and are revealed, public confidence, including that of the political elite, in our abilities lessen.

Output and Grade Inflation

The data depicting the quantitative and qualitative output of academia are convincing. However, where the former reflects positively on the educational system, the latter remains an embarrassment and cheapens the quantitative achievements. One commendable accomplishment has been alluded to above, i.e., the system's struggle to provide equal access to all population segments. Yet, the improved access may be rendered useless if students leave the system with credentials, but without the skills to enhance their lifestyles and those dependent upon them. "True equity requires all...access to quality...education" (Justin and Edmendorf, 1984).

The volume and chronology of the data suggest that the decline of academic quality began in the public schools and spread to higher

education. Regardless, the 80s closed with too many progressing "from kindergarten to graduate school without being required to meet educational standards of earlier years." Even at Harvard University, "large numbers of doctoral students require courses in writing" (McCabe and Skidmore, 1982). When the causes of the decline in standards are recognized, the majority can be used to explain, as opposed justify, the erosion of student achievement in both the public schools and institutions of higher education. Yet, despite the common problem and contributing phenomena, the K-12 grades are subject to forces beyond the scope of discussion herein. Instead, attention will focus on post secondary education, especially the community colleges.

The literature offers several factors that have provoked the waning of standards on college campuses. All of these can be conveniently categorized as economic and/or philosophical in nature. An example of a philosophical influence is the post 60s "reluctance to discriminate...abandoning the will to make distinctions, to sort and select" (Goldman, 1985). The perceived necessity to maintain enrollment levels serves as an economic stimulus. Whereas, open admissions can be placed in either category. Not as easily extracted from published material is the relative, dampening impact on quality exerted by the two factors. However, the literature hints that educational philosophy has been displaced by economic drives as the primary force behind the march to academic mediocrity. Though this interpretation of the literature can be debated, there can be no argument that economic-self interest of higher education is best served by quantitative, as opposed to qualitative, output. There also can be no dissent that the economic force is formidable regardless of its relative control over output. This force represents the influence of 3,100 institutions which

employ over 2 million, enroll 13.1 million, and accounts for three percent of the gross national product (Justin and Edmendorf, 1984).

Given the economic realities propelling the enrollment driven institutions of higher education, it is no wonder that production, FTE production that is, has become an end in itself. Reflecting on the demise of academic standards and the emergence of productivity goals, Curtis (1985) simply states, "It is as if no one cares, so long as the store stays opened." With production as a prevalent mission of collegial governance, the next question is what are the means employed to achieve the quantitative output. Again, the literature exposes several agents, but the most interesting and encompassing is the practices and results of grade inflation. Grade inflation is defined in comparative terms. One definition identifies grade inflation by the academic performance between classes over time. For example, undergraduate grades rose from a C+ to a B+ in a nine year period at a major university without explanation (Weller, 1984). The more common definition recognizes grade inflation as a rise in grades with an accompanying decline in measured academic achievement in students. For institutions genuinely concerned with enriching the lives of students through education, it is the second definition that should be awaking.

John Ritter gained fame and fortune from his role in the television series Three's Company. His current show, Hopperman, will add to his list of successful credits. Besides preforming in these popular shows, Mr. Ritter hawks a three hour cassette entitled, "Where There is a Will There is an A." During the TV commercial Mr. Ritter states, among other things, the motivational message within the tape will allow " C/D students to become A/B students overnight." Whether the product can or can not deliver the service is unknown and appropriately left for discovery. What is known is C/D

students have become A/B students as a result of grade inflation; and the conversion process has taken decades, not overnight. Grade inflation has its roots in the late 60s and emerged as an issue in the early 70s. Since then, grade inflation has received much attention and ink. Yet, the phenomenon went unchecked and by the 80s, infected colleges and universities throughout the United States "whether large or small, public or private, two or four year" (Potter, 1979). To find large state organizations, e.g., University of California-Berkeley, University of Wisconsin, and the University of Texas-Austin, cited in the literature was not unexpected; seeing Dartmouth and Vassar was. Within the large universities like Ohio State, schools of education produced the highest incidence of negatively skewed grade distributions (Oldenquist, 1983). And, Weller (1986) showed these schools less likely to be interested in the academic phenomena. Regardless of the various levels of interest of specific segments of the academic community, grade inflation will continue to breed less than a desirable output. It will do so until the system rejects, instead of accommodating, mediocre achievement. And, the system has been very accommodating. As the caliber of incoming high school graduates deteriorated since the mid 60s, their grade point average (GPA) at the collegial level increased. They generated record numbers of A/B grades and the resulting honors. One private, liberal arts college was able to graduate a class with over a 3.0 GPA (Potter, 1979).

The students leaving the hallowed halls with credentials, but without commensurate skills, are the primary victims of the inflationary practices required to maintain retention and graduation rates. The practices range from the professional's ability to dummy down college texts to the refusal of faculty to administer D and F grades. Oldenquist (1983) writes, "texts

used 15 years ago can not be used today because students can not read them: the vocabulary is too rich, the sentences too complex, and the ideas too difficult." Six years later, Monroe Stearns' Shays' Rebellion, written and illustrated for use in junior high classes, was a supplemental text in a college level history class at a two year institution in the midwest. At best, Stearns' book should be considered for the remedial programs which have been created to accommodate the academically unprepared student. However, the distinction between college level and remedial studies is irrelevant in many cases because some institutions award college credit for remedial work. The credits are then applied toward final GPA and hours earned. It is thus possible to hold a college degree, with honors, based upon a record partially composed of work at the secondary level and below. Such deeds help to generate the quantitative output of higher education and account for qualitative results. The qualitative output of the system will only improve when the inflationary trend is reversed by quality control. Grades are the quality control mechanism of academia. Grade inflation and the supporting practices do not allow the imperfect mechanism to function. To correct, the academic establishment must return to the tradition of using grades to measure academic achievement, not motivation, persistence, attendance, participation, etc. Perhaps with achievement at the forefront, other mickey mouse practices, which have crept into the system, will disappear. The most caring of these was uncovered in a two year college in the East. A teacher administered open book tests. After each test question, a page number was listed so the student could more efficiently locate the answer. The testing technique, plus a class curve, produced legions of A/B world civilization students. In fairness to the instructor, he was encouraged and rewarded for doing so and for setting institutional

FTE records. In fairness to the students, FTE production must be recognized as the major obstacle to improved achievement levels.

As stated above, grade inflation fuels our enrollment driven institutions. Recognizing the positive correlation between inflated grades and the economic well-being of institutions, Goldman (1985), writes: "...grade inflation is especially wrong where institutional or personal gain...has been the motivation...using students for our purposes, not treating students as ends-in-themselves." In "The Betrayal of the Gatekeeper: Grade Inflation," Goldman also raises the ethical questions inherent in permitting short-term economic gains to take precedence over the long-term needs of students and society. Students need to leave college with basic skills in order to enjoy a proactive role in society. Conversely, our technological society requires these skilled individuals to maintain America's growth and development.

Actually, there are no ethical questions. What is occurring is wrong. As a matter of educational morality, no entity should have the right, under academic freedom or any other canon, to induce students to become underachievers.

Community Colleges and Student Achievement

Community colleges, and to a lesser extent four year institutions with an open admission policy, receive a high proportion of students who are underachievers or nonachievers. Community college leaders acknowledge that the majority of entering students represent the lower two quartiles of the academic and socio-economic scales. John Roueche (1973) used such descriptive phrases as "educational deficient," "acute personal problems,"

and "negative attitudes toward schooling" to characterize the largest segment of community college students. Arthur Cohen (1980) added "pragmatic" and "not self motivated" to the list of characteristics. In 1968, Roger Garrison wrote, "Many of them are functionally illiterate or close to it...At least half...need...remedial work." In the 1980s, testing at Miami-Dade Community College, the flagship of the two year colleges, found "two-thirds of all entering students...deficient in either reading, writing, or mathematics," indicating the enrollment pattern has not changed significantly (McCabe and Skidmore, 1982). Others hold the same perception of the community college enrollee. Arthur Ashe, former tennis star and now writer for the Washington Post, stated, "If you can't score 700 (on the SAT), I think you should be in a community college..." (AP, 1/89). And, the community colleges do not deny that they serve a large, academically unprepared population. Instead, these institutions have proudly accepted the responsibility of educating the underserved and formally disenfranchised. The same institutions boost of being the "peoples college," "the second chance college," and some spokespersons, like Garrison, use the adjective "last chance."

By accepting the responsibility for providing educational opportunities to an academically deficient, heterogeneous population, the community colleges serve an extremely important social role in our democratic society. That role, in turn, offered the colleges access to a large student market, which responded to the "open doors" in record number. The growth of the community college system, in term of students, personnel, and institutions, from the mid 60s to the 80s is thoroughly documented. The quantitative output as measured by graduates has also been recognized. In 1971, 252,610 associate degrees were awarded; in 1986, 446,047, a 77 percent

increase, which accounted for 44 percent of the degree growth of higher education for the fifteen year period (Stern, 1988).

The community college system has been able to sustain phenomenal growth and credentialling activity in spite of the academic preparation of incoming students. Using John Ritter's commercial message again, "The fact that it can happen at all is a miracle." However, no mystical power is at work; grade inflation is. Inflated grades, and the decline in standards the educational malpractice reflects, accounts for the productivity. It explains how the system converts students labelled as deficient, negative, and functionally illiterate into college graduates, even honor students. It also accounts for the competencies, or lack thereof, of the exiting student. Too many are graduating without necessary skills. They can not write a coherent paragraph because they studied English composition under an instructor who taught English through student speeches. When the tenured instructor was asked to reconsider her teaching techniques in light of course objectives, she firmly stated, "few students would pass composition without their speech grades." Mid-west college students may too be economically illerate because their economics teacher allows attendance to heavily impact upon grades. He also permits access to notes during testing sessions. The same teacher gives his college students a handout that reads, "Goods are useful; therefore, goods have value. Goods have value; therefore, goods are..." That is simple enough, but how about the very pure sciences? The same mid-west community college has adopted a chemistry text which lists in chapter two the following objective, "find the area of a square, rectangle, circle, or triangle" (Sherman and Sherman, 1984). If standards are compromised or dummied down any further, the college degree will not possess much utility; therefore, will not be much good; therefore...

There are two variables linked to the community college movement which could be used to explain the significant difference between the incoming and exiting student. Community colleges have traditionally been proponents of remediation and a student centered philosophy. Neither are topics herein but are noteworthy as intervening variables. The remedial programs have been justified, funded, applauded, and analyzed. The applause may be deserved in isolated cases. However, the analysis depicts the programs as ineffective. Moore (1970) candidly concludes, "odds are that the high risk student will not be better off after his...remedial experience than he was before..." Another, more sweeping, evaluation of the affect of community college corrective attempts determined that "remedial work, according to numerous studies, is limited in its effectiveness..(yielding) little academic improvement" (Handleman, 1980). Thus, it is safe to eliminate remediation as a significant force in the student transition process, i.e., from academically deficient to highly proficient.

The philosophy, on the other hand, seems to support student success more than student achievement. Too often student success is defined in terms of persistence, class standing, and completion. A publication with this bent is appropriately entitled, Assuring Student Success in the Community College. More to the point is Garrison. Garrison (1968) advises that students be rated according to their ability, the aims of the course, and the grading patterns of other faculty. He goes on to say "this doesn't necessarily mean that you compromise...excellence...It means...you must rethink, in light of the realities..., what is meant by excellence". This is a very dangerous philosophy, written for the comfort of the faculty and their supporting cast, not the student. Inducing persisters and

graduates through inflated credentials does a disservice to students and may waste their "second or last change" to achieve.

Students must have the right to grades and credentials that reflect, as accurately as possible, their level of competency. The literature relevant to grade inflation witnesses a more unreliable grading and credentialling system than possible and necessary. The same body of research offers many examples of skewed grading scales, names affected organizations, and even departments and schools within the organization. Notably absence from these random references are community colleges. It may be an oversight. It may be that the data are not convenient. It may be the output is not noteworthy in that the educational product of two year colleges has always been suspect. Or, the product is of no interest to the researchers who are attached to and oriented toward the performance of senior institutions.

Remembering that grade inflation is universal, touching students at public and private, large and small, and two and four year colleges, it is not difficult to muster a data base. As grade inflation studies do, a single institution can be the targeted for testing. That narrow focus can be amplified if the findings are determined to be generic, i.e, representative of a larger population. Data from a small (less than 1000 FTE) community college were collected for a three year period, 1985-1987. The college did not have an organized remediation effort, did not have a significant enrollment in remedial courses, and did not administer comprehensive finals or even schedule for final exams. Most of the faculty held graduate degrees in their teaching field; one, a Ph.D. There was little turn over or innovation among the faculty. Student characteristics were typical. Contrary to their academic preparation and social-economic status, student grades were surprisingly excellent. In the summer of 1985, 56.1% of all grades

(A-F) were As. As and Bs equaled 74.6% of the total. In the summer of 86 and 87, A/B ratings consumed 72.6% and 71.2% of their respective distributions. The percent of As during the fall quarters never exceeded 40%. When As and Bs were consolidated, the sum accounted for 63.7% of the fall 1985 total, 64.8% of 1986's and 58.9% of 1987's. The impact of inflated student ratings were most obvious at graduation. Using the college's 1987 commencement bulletin, 48 percent of the class graduated cum laude (3.2 GPA) or higher in college transfer programs. For other programs, 69% of the credentials awarded were distinguished by honors (3.2 GPA or better). Forty three per cent of these were highest honors which required a minimum 3.8 GPA.

The college operates within a state system which allowed access to a larger data base. In comparing the data, only the traditional grading scale was used because those grades generated GPA and were dispensed throughout the state system. The same was not true for ratings such as I, R, P, S. In the fall quarter of 1986, 38.3% of the grades issued at the college were As; 26.5% were Bs. For the same period, 39% of the grades let by the state system were As; 28% were Bs. In the fall of 1985, 63.7% of grades recorded at the college were either As or Bs. The other institutions of the system yielded a range of A/Bs anchored by a high of 75% and a low of 57%. The mean for the 1985 range was 65.65% (VCCS, 1987). The data indicates that grade inflation was a system problem, not one confined to a small, enrollment driven community college. Once more, the negatively skewed distribution of student ratings was accomplished in spite of the enrollment of the underprepared and theretofore disinfranchised. In the fall of 1987 with these facts at hand, four major objectives emanated from the state community college system. The first and foremost was the expansion of

efforts to recruit and retain student enrollments. Regretfully for the students, none were concerned with academic quality.

Academic Excellence and Economic Realities

It is the economic realities confronting enrollment driven institutions that have fueled the demise of standards. The thesis herein is that economic self-interest has contributed more to the decline of academic services to students than any other variable. It is also the position herein that economic self-interest is the most formidable force to any movement toward academic excellence. There is much evidence, though not statistical, to give face validity to the corrupting influence of budget realities. In the early 70s, states were forced to employee FTE auditors to inspect college records to curb attempts to pad enrollment figures. The Veterans Administration followed suit to stop abuses in its entitlement program. This year the US Department of Justice announced an anti-trust investigation into the activities of a cluster of private colleges. The Chronicle of Higher Education reports: "...legislators are cracking down on for-profit trade schools...that...are taking money from needy students and failing to provide good job training" (Wilson, 1989). Secretary of Education Lauro F. Cavazos is cracking down on all. In a letter dated May 31, 1989, concerning the guaranteed student loan program, Cavazos states: "...changes in the status quo will be hard pills to swallow; but clearly, the status quo is not serving the best interests of...America's students." Cavazos position was embellished in a later news release, wherein he is quoted: "there are more unscrupulous and uncaring institutions out there...We must weed out unethical schools...whose sole purpose is to profit

at the expense of our students..." (Murphy, 1989). One college on Cavazos' list of unethical establishments has been sent a bill for 22 million dollars. Tarkio College, affiliated with the Presbyterian Church, "fraudulently received financial aid and lied about how it spent Federal funds" (Fickel, 1989). More germane and pointed is an editorial entitled "Predators". The commentary exposes the competition for students and the economic rewards reaped therefrom by enrollment driven colleges. Though Neavoll (1989) attacks the higher educational system of a state, his choicest words are reserved for community colleges: "Universities...encourage whatever predatory instincts may lurk in the beasts of community college administrators eager for higher enrollments." He concludes, because of the economic incentives, "colleges and universities alike sometimes concentrate more on protecting enrollments...then on what they might do to nurture students..."

It will require a concerted effort to neutralize the debilitating influence that economic considerations have had on academic standards. Ideally, college faculties would lead the effort for they are most familiar with the erosion of quality and possess the means to enrich qualitative output. Their familiarity with the problem is attested to by survey data released by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. According to 5,450 faculty polled in 1989, two thirds "think there has been a widespread lowering of standards in U.S. higher education" (Kelly, 11/1989). To their credit some faculty have attempted to reverse the nearly universal trend. Southeastern Massachusetts University (SMU) had one such faculty member. The faculty member's refusal to inflate grades led to his non-renewal and a court battle. The Federal court's decision reads: "We will assume...that (the professor's) refusal to lower his standards was a

substantial motivating factor...in the decision not to renew..." (Mills, 1986). In upholding the university's non-renewal, the court recognized the right of the institution to gear standards to university concerns as opposed to academic standards of the subject specialist. Edward K. Echert, professor at Saint Bonaventure University, serves as a second example of a faculty member resisting academic decay. Echert's (1988) story appeared in The Chronicle of Higher Education, not a legal brief. Without elaboration, the professor confesses to the declining quality of student work and his inability to produce a positive change in their performance. Therefore, he capitulates to lower standards, looking to "the glorious summer months...away from campus." His most telling remark, as far as the economics of the system are concerned, reads: "College teaching is a good life. It pays my bills...I wasn't going to kill the goose that lays that golden egg." The untenured professor from SMU may have served the system better by cooperating until tenured.

Isolated faculty attacks on academic mediocrity will not counter the significant economic force supporting the decline of educational quality. The attacks do have the power to call the problem to the attention of others who may be able to orchestrate corrective action. Of these, accrediting agencies would seem to be the most likely candidate for the leadership role. However, evidence points to a history of ineptness among the agencies. In In the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community the following question is posed, "Why have regional and specialized accrediting agencies been unsuccessful in arresting the debasement of ...education?" The answer to the question is simply accreditation has focused on components and procedures rather than qualitative output. Recently, the Assistant Attorney General of Missouri

was able to secure accreditation for a fictitious business college by properly making application. The "experience demonstrates the ease with which shoddy institutions can obtain some form of accreditation" (Cage, 1989). The ease of gaining accreditation is matched by the ease of maintaining the status. A public community college in Ohio received an additional five year accrediting period after the visiting team found history teachers assigned to biology classes, math teachers to sociology classes, history teachers to Spanish classes, etc. The faculty utilization problem was compounded by several significant concerns in administration and budgeting.

Leadership and Educational Morality

There are some positive signs of leadership emanating from governing bodies and officials. Governmental leadership has manifested itself in management as well as philosophical terms. President Bush has taken the philosophical position that there is no substitute for quality. Mr. Bush elaborates by saying quality output should be heavily rewarded and lesser results be known, while holding those responsible for the output accountable. Bill Clinton, Governor of Arkansas, believes that classroom teachers must posses basic intellectual skills. His answer to the question, also solicited in Integrity in the College Curriculum..., "Why have our colleges and universities turned loose on...schools thousands of graduates unqualified to teach?" is these institutions do not have that prerogative. Mr. Clinton moved that philosophy to the state legislature where it was endorsed by legislation requiring the testing of teachers. Other states have converted philosophical principles into the management objectives.

Florida mandated literacy testing for students in what "appears to be a new effort...to hold public schools and colleges accountable" (Handleman, 1980). In early 1989, Texas was preparing to implement a testing program which holds students accountable for the decline of academic output of the state's educational system. Students must pass a skills test before they can enroll in upper level college courses. The same test must be passed to receive an associate degree, regardless of earned credits, GPA, and faculty recommendations. According to Joan Matthews, who directs the screening program for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the testing will salvage a lot more students and give "their degrees much more significance" (Mangan, 1989). The tone of the message allows significance to be defined as intellectual utility.

Though the attention to quality is a welcomed change, the intrusion of political mandates into the academic arena is ominous. Political intrusion means laws and regulations which require administrative, legislative, and judicial interpretation. To prevent additional and more obtrusive political intervention, educational leaders must be secured and they must lead. Leaders do not count bricks, positions, and FTE; leaders empower others. Educational leaders empower students through quality educational programs which provide career opportunities and the intellectual skills for life long learning. It has been the lack of educational leadership, not poor communication, inadequate funding and/or human relation skills, etc., that has placed a nation at risk. Perot's report on the Texas educational system " found, as is usually the case in business, that the problems begin at the top..." Perot witnessed a system, lacking accountability for academic achievement, which was being led by a majority who had "no earthly idea about what was happening in the classroom." Texas is not an exception; Texas

is just one of 50 states experiencing academic decay despite improved facilities, salaries, and overall growth.

Few professional educators would agree that there is a dearth of leadership within higher education. More would acknowledge that leaders are too often distracted by peripheral issues, thus unable to contribute to the main mission of the college. Regardless, the fact is chief administrative officers (CEOs) have a tendency to concentrate on economic conditions not student achievement. The main mission of the college is often delegated while CEOs immerse themselves in peripheral issues such as budget building strategies. The marketing of the college program has precedence over the quality of the academic program. And, the production of the academic program, because of budget building implication, receives more attention than the resulting student achievement levels. Therefore, presidents can cite their organizational FTE base, but few can quote institutional grade distributions. Most can discuss marketing and retention goals, but the same have difficulty identifying outcome measurements and goals. CEOs dominated by economic goals can not be effective leaders. The point is better said by Kellerman (1988): "The president of a college...who would forget that his or hers is an institution of higher learning, dedicated not to the pursuit of profit but of knowledge, is destined to play a pedestrian role at best."

The task confronting higher education is to locate leaders who can avoid the economic corruption, more would say economic realities, of enrollment driven institutions. Presidents must ignore the bottom line syndrome "that pervades our society, causing us to set our sights on short-term profits at the expense of our nation's future" (Creton, 1988). The nation's future is in the hands of students who pass through our campuses. It is their skills which will dictate the standard of living in

America hereafter. The next generation of presidents must be student oriented. They must be concerned by quality output. Locating such maybe difficult for there is no apparent talent pool.

The uncertain leadership potential accessible to community colleges became a topic in the late 80s. Discussion was precipitated by the retirement of an inordinate numbers of long time CEOs and spokespersons. The numbers exiting caused some to anticipate a leadership crisis. Others, most recently Jess H. Parrish, have confidence in the capacity of the maturing community college system to develop replacements. If replacements were all that were required, a cloning mechanism would suffice to develop agency heads. Too often, especially in state systems, there has been a cloning mechanism in place, and the decision makers naturally promoted individuals with similar values, styles, and experiences. Thus, the status quo is secured, blessed, and-- worst-- perpetuated. The status quo emphasizes organizational development over student development, under the misguided rational that the stronger the organization becomes the more services it will be able to offer. Will be? When? 2089?

Parrish (1988) recognized the changing of the guard taking place, do to retiring presidents, as an opportunity. The last sentence of his article reads: "Wouldn't it be nice to leave our institutions in better hands than ours?" Parrish calls on several segments of the educational system to participate in the development of new leaders. The two that hold the most promise are the graduate schools and professional organizations. For professional organizations to become an active player, they must firmly advocate the mission of community college movement. Since no community college mission statement calls for the maximizing of budgets through student FTE, professional groups should ignore programs and persons

associated with that objective and cheapening of academic quality it necessitates. For graduate schools to become involved, they too must prepare for the role.

Traditionally, community colleges have looked to schools of education for decision makers. One of the marked features of the schools has been the academic achievement level of the student admitted. Like community colleges, the schools routinely accept students from the lower portion of the potential student pool, as measured by the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). Between 1963 and 1977, 77,000 sat for the GRE. Of the 4,365 who applied to schools of education, 84% scored below average in math; 81%, below average in verbal skills. Few, about 2%, distinguished themselves (Frye, 1979). Frye claimed that the lesser achieving students are able to move through the graduate schools of education because the course work "almost totally lacking in content." Frye's charge is levied without substantial evidence. However, many subsequent reports have concluded the same. These studies liken the performance of the graduate schools to that of the community colleges, i.e., high numbers of enrollees, taken from the lower quartiles of the student achievement pool, who generate high grades and receive proper credentials, and exit with few competencies. The most damaging and inclusive evaluation of the 500 graduate programs related to school administration was issued in 1989. Watkins (1989) listed the main findings of the report which described the programs as "irrelevant, outdated, and unchallenging;" the graduate student as "what can be enrolled;" the faculty as "given up on holding students to graduate level work;" and "dissertations as methodologically inadequate and banal." Lastly, and of major import to the subject herein, the report "laid part of the blame of this mediocrity on institutional greed."

The universities have been asked to help solve many social ills. During the 80s, graduate schools of business were asked to assume a proactive role in developing a sense of ethics in those released to Wall Street and other financial complexes. Graduate schools of education must do the same. To breed educational morality, the schools must first become role models, distancing themselves from allegations of greed and mediocrity. Once positioned for academic integrity, programs should be organized to impart those professional competencies and values required to lead. Our massive system needs educational leaders, not bureau chiefs. Education involves a qualitative change in the learner. Educational leaders must possess the skills to produce quality learning experiences for students and the values to resist the corrupting forces of economic-self interest. Leadership involves forsaking competitive advantage for educational morality.

Conclusion

America's automotive industry was once an independent, proud, and dominant force here and abroad. Today, experts agree the auto capital of the world is not in the U.S. but in Japan. The demise of our automobile industry had little to do with Detroit's quantitative output. It had much to do with qualitative output, which was sacrificed to maintain productivity goals. The management philosophy which guided the descent of the industry is best captured in the statement "What's good for GM is good for America." A second or third rate automotive industry is not good for America. The U.S. can not afford a second, third or...rate educational system either.

There is ample evidence that our educational system is approaching a similar destiny. Academia is busily pursuing maximum production at the

expense of quality output. The economic self-interest of the college has taken precedence over the educational needs of the student and nation. To accommodate the economic interests of the institution, many quality control mechanisms were dismantled or compromised. The assault on the mechanisms can be traced to the 60s; the resulting trends were evident in the early 70s. By the end of the 70s, the trends were labelled significant problems. Educators, joined by political leaders, entered the 80s armed with data, good intentions, and demanding change. Many commissions were formed and reports issued, the highlight being A Nation at Risk. The publication verified previous conclusions, listed a multitude of recommendations, and--most significantly-- placed educational quality on the national agenda.

Events in 1989 lead to the suspicion that little progress has occurred during the reform minded 80s. This year Oklahoma State's Dexter Manley confessed that he was a non-reader. With 20% of adults holding a college degree, The National Science Foundation found 95% of adults scientifically illiterate. The U.S. Secretary of Education referred to some institutions of higher education as unscrupulous and uncaring. The U.S. Department of Justice announced an anti-trust investigation into the activities of a cluster of colleges. The flagship of the community college system was rocked by an internal investigation. At least one newspaper editor characterized the colleges quest for FTE as predatory. And, last but not least, a national commission, composed of educators, used the word "greedy" to help explain the mediocre output of the ivy halls. So, we march into the 90s with the same problems being perpetrated by the same causes and persons.

Unlike the automotive industry, America's two and four year colleges do not have an apparent change agent or leader. U.S. car producers had Toyota,

Mazda, Volvo, and others to clarify issues and alternatives. One obvious alternative was to continue high production with minimum quality control and prepare for bankruptcy. America's wealth will protect the enrollment driven institution from bankruptcy but not from further academic decay. Real and comparative losses in student achievement levels will be abated when a sense of educational morality displaces economic self-interest at the operational level. Competent leaders will be required to insist that operational objectives support our student-centered mission statements. Ideally, that leadership potential should be developed from within the system. Yet, the system seems unprepared for the task. The ivy halls have their own problems to overcome. Other systems, including professional organizations, are mainly networks. Good ole boy and girl networks seem more comfortable with cloning activities than in individual development and intellectual diversity. Therefore, the intrusion of the political forces to increase quality are welcomed. The challenge is to make their presence as short-termed as possible.

Lastly, two other changes in the 80s may prove, in not too many years, to become significant variables vis-a-vis educational morality. First, the ability of the U.S. to sustain our large educational system, without a significant return in intellectual competencies, is not a given. In the last 10 years, the U.S. has gone from the largest creditor nation to the largest debtor nation. Second, the expansion of consumer rights may lead to our campuses. The rising costs of a college education will encourage the credential illiterate and/or unemployable to seek redress. Our system may not be able to produce an abundance of theorists or technicians but lawyers...

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